THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) is under implementation since Rabi 1999-2000 in the country and the same in continuing at present. A Pilot Project on Farm Income Insurance Scheme (FIIS) was launched in Rabi 2003-04 and Kharif 2004 seasons in the selected districts/States. But based on the findings on the Concurrent Evaluation Study undertaken by an independent agency and the recommendations of the Joint Group constituted to study the improvements required in the existing Crop Insurance Schemes, it has been discontinued with effect from rabi 2004-05 season. Some general insurance companies are implementing Rainfall Insurance Schemes on their own.

(c) and (d) A Joint Group was constituted by the Government to suggest the improvements required in the crop insurance schemes. The Joint Group has since submitted its report and the Government is consulting Stakeholders regarding these recommendations.

Closing the Kisan Call Centres

†475. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have closed the Kisan Call Centres providing agriculture related information;

(b) if so, the reasons for closing these centres;

(c) whether Government have made any alternative arrangement for providing information related to agriculture; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) do not arise.

Crop Loss in Vidarbha

476. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether Government are aware of the heavy loss to crops in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra due to heavy rains and hailstorms this year in winter season;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government have provided any relief to the farmers of Vidarbha to compensate them for loss of crops due to this natural calamity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) Government of Maharashtra have informed that rains and hailstorms during January-February, 2005 caused crop loss, particularly in Amravati, Buldhana, Nagpur, Wardha and Yeotmal Districts of Vidarbha region. The area suffering damage exceeding 50% in these Districts is 3982 hectares. As per the standing orders of the State Gvoernment, Rs. 1000/- per hectare, limited to 2 hectares is payable in such cases. Funds for this purpose are already available under Calamity Relief Fund (CRF). Entire Central share of CRF for 2004-2005 amounting to Rs. 143.31 crores has been released to the State.

Ministry of Home Affairs, being the Nodal Ministry, has so far received no Memorandum for additional assistance from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) from the State Government.

Joint declaration by farmers' association

477. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether about forty farmers' associations from across the country in a Joint Declaration in December 2004 have demanded a separate budget on Agriculture on the lines of General and Rail Budget;

(b) whether they have also demanded that "Agriculture" be transferred to the Concurrent list;

(c) if so, the details and other related demands made in the Joint Declaration; and

(d) the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) A letter has been received from